



Downtown Idea Exchange

Improving physical, social, and economic conditions downtown

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Despite the pandemic, the mood at the International Downtown Association’s annual conference, which took place virtually in early October, was upbeat. Much of the content in this issue is based on *Downtown Idea Exchange’s* coverage of the event.

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

Downtown rethinks approach to parking

Does downtown Memphis, TN, have too much parking, or too little? The complicated answer: Yes to both queries.

“It really depends on when, where, and how far away you want to park,” says Brett Roler, vice president of planning and development at the Downtown Memphis Commission.

Visitors can struggle to find spots at peak hours. But, at any given moment, downtown has thousands of empty spots.

It’s just that many of those open spaces are in private garages and

not accessible to most motorists. Or the spots are in parking lots outside of the four- to five-block sweet spot that most visitors are willing to walk.

With self-driving cars on the horizon and new mobility trends roiling the transportation industry, Memphis (est. pop. 650,632) has taken a more thoughtful approach to investing in parking.

Roler describes the city’s three-part approach:

Use existing parking first.

Memphis has begun using sharing

(Continued on page 4)

ATTRACTION

Massive meal brings residents together, boosts optimism

Downtown leaders in Grand Forks, ND (est. pop. 56,556), had a question: Could serving a free hot meal to hundreds of people, and encouraging them to talk to their neighbors, improve community pride and engagement?

That is the premise behind Grand Forks’ Longest Table events. The experiment kicked off in 2018, when organizers assembled a 750-foot table along University Avenue

and welcomed more than 700 guests.

The first attempt was so successful that Grand Forks made its Longest Table even longer in 2019 — 1,250 feet of seating space and more than 800 guests.

The COVID-19 pandemic canceled the event for 2020. But it’ll be back for 2021, perhaps with shorter tables, says Kathryn Kester,

(Continued on page 8)

Goodbye suburban malls, hello walkable shopping districts

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the retail landscape was changing dramatically. The COVID-19 recession has accelerated merchants' move back to Main Street, says Robert Gibbs, director of Gibbs Planning Group Inc.

Some 75 percent of suburban shopping malls and 60 percent of large outdoor shopping malls, or power centers, will close by 2025, Gibbs predicts. And urban cores will benefit.

"We are anticipating that there will be a boom for downtown restaurants and retailers in the post-pandemic era," says Gibbs.

Thousands of retailers shuttered even before the pandemic, and that pace is only increasing amid the coronavirus recession, Gibbs says. The sobering numbers are wrenching for retailers and suburban landlords, but they bring good news for downtowns.

"About 40,000 retailers have closed in the last two years," Gibbs says. "As a result, there are hundreds of thousands of highly skilled restaurant workers, chefs, and retail workers who are looking to open their own store. These laid-off workers have raised money from friends and family, and they want to open a small, inexpensive space in any walkable downtown."

Many downtown landlords have been "flooded" with interest from independent retailers, Gibbs says.

Michael Deemer, executive vice president for Business Development at the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, likewise believes that urban cores are poised for a surge of interest from retailers leaving suburbia.

"It is walkable retail that really matters," he says.

Meanwhile, commercial property owners' calculus about desirable retailers has done a 180-degree turn. Mall owners once coveted national tenants with strong creditworthiness.

These days, many downtowns are turning away national names.

"Almost every downtown we consult with does not want national chains," Gibbs says.

That means even seemingly desirable retailers like urban-scale Target and Wal-Mart locations are rejected. Gibbs disputes the wisdom of that policy — would you rather have a national retailer driving traffic to your district, or pulling shoppers to the suburbs?

At any rate, if your downtown rejects national merchants and you don't have a base of independent retailers, a public library can drive traffic, Gibbs says.

In another twist, with many national merchants filing for bankruptcy, independent retailers have proven more dependable about paying the rent. Those trends set up many downtowns to seriously compete with the 'burbs for the first time in decades.

"Our goal, when we advise downtowns, is to shoot for market share of 25 percent," Gibbs says.

For a downtown to achieve that level of activity, it needs a solid base of profitable retailers. A rule of thumb is that retailers should aim for sales of \$350 per square foot per year. For a 1,200-square-foot store, that equates to \$1,000 a day.

For perspective, Apple stores — which are hugely successful — do \$5,000 a square foot per year. At the opposite end of the viability scale, small retailers average just \$85 a square foot — which isn't a sustainable level. Stores doing that little business operate as hobbies rather than viable enterprises, Gibbs says.

Evening hours are essential

Competing with suburbia requires at least one basic feature — make sure you're open at night. That's when busy, affluent people take time to refocus from working to spending.

"About 75 percent of all retail sales occur after 5 p.m.," Gibbs says. "If your downtown

"Almost every downtown we consult with does not want national chains."



DowntownDevelopment.com

To learn more about **[downtown bans on national chains](#)**, go to DowntownDevelopment.com and click on **["Web Extras."](#)**

closes at 5 or 6 p.m., you are giving up about 75 percent of the market.”

Also, be certain to keep downtown’s streetscape looking good. Gibbs advises against spending heavily on benches, planters, trash cans, and other items. Instead, he suggests buying less expensive outdoor furnishings, repainting them annually, and replacing them once a decade or so.

“The money should go to facades or landscaping and designs,” Gibbs says.

As for parking, Gibbs says, you should have parking meters in front of stores. If not, small business owners will use prime

spots outside their stores all day — and then complain that there’s no parking for their customers.

And when you do charge for on-street parking, don’t use kiosks — if one person can’t figure out the machine, lines will form. Instead, go with individual meters for each space, and make sure the machines accept coins and credit cards.

“The old-fashioned meters are the best way to go,” Gibbs says.

Contact: Robert Gibbs, Gibbs Planning Group, 248-642-4800; Michael Deemer, **Downtown Cleveland Alliance**, 216-280-5088. **DIX**

Seven rules for developing downtown business recruitment data

As your downtown grows more sophisticated, and as retailers increasingly look to invest in main street locations, developing credible and comprehensive recruitment data is ever more important.

Emily Brett, senior manager of economic development at the Downtown Denver Partnership, offers these tips for developing recruitment data, and producing meaningful reports, without breaking your budget:

- **Define boundaries, and be consistent.** But don’t be afraid of city-wide data seen through a downtown lens. “When I first started, I was so obsessed with getting downtown data,” Brett says. That’s not always possible. For instance, census tracts don’t overlap with the boundaries of downtown Denver.
- **Identify sources of repeat data.** Proprietary databases, such as those from commercial

real estate firm CoStar, can be expensive. Look for downtown partners who will share data with you — but be sure you’ll be able to get the same data next quarter or next year.

- **Create a clear process, and document it.** For your reports to be credible and meaningful, you’ll want to make sure your data is consistent from year to year.
- **Collect your own data.** The U.S. Census, public property appraisers, and other government sources offer free data. Cities and counties also compile data, as do airports and transit authorities. And don’t forget that you’re the expert on your downtown — you can create your own databases, such as catalogs of retail space, development activity reports, or surveys of landowners and employers.
- **Don’t overthink it.** With insightful data, straightforward, simple reports can be just as valuable

as glossy, expensively designed tomes. “You don’t need to spend a ton of money on graphic design,” Brett says.

As your report grows more sophisticated, you might use tools from ESRI or Tableau. When you start, though, keep it simple.

- **Be careful about sponsorships.** Downtown Denver, for a time, partnered with a commercial real estate firm to sponsor its report. However, that firm’s prominent logo meant competing commercial real estate firms refused to share the report with their clients.
- **Don’t reinvent the wheel.** Look at other downtowns’ reports, and poach their formats and ideas. Downtown organizations typically make their dashboards and reports available for free, and they cite their data sources, which can spark ideas for your report.

Contact: Emily Brett, **Downtown Denver Partnership**, ebrett@downtowndevelopment.com.

Downtown rethinks approach to parking

— Continued from page 1

agreements to unlock private parking for public use. The goal is to increase use of private garages for downtown offices — those facilities have many spaces that go unused from 5 p.m. until 9 a.m.

The Downtown Memphis Commission hopes to use one downtown office building as a test case. The site next door to the office building is ideal for apartments, and Roler hopes to negotiate for the apartments to use the office building's garage overnight, when covered spaces aren't being occupied by office tenants.

“Frankly, we don't want to be the idiots that build the last giant, empty parking garage.”

The Downtown Memphis Commission is also exploring shuttles to make outlying parking lots more attractive. The goal is to give visitors a safe and convenient way to park more than five blocks from their destinations.

Build new parking strategically and sparingly. Memphis has begun using a parking investment decision tool that factors in

a variety of variables. The model seeks to balance the costs and benefits of spending public dollars on parking.

For instance, the tool looks at the goal of relieving pressure in high-demand areas. The tool also gauges public investment against the parking capacity gained, and the economic impact of new parking.

That doesn't mean the commission is seeking a prohibition on new parking garages. After all, parking remains crucial for downtown merchants and office tenants.

The new approach does mean that Memphis is taking a closer look at the costs and benefits of structured parking.

What's more, a big question looms over parking: How soon will self-driving cars eliminate the need for parking? That future is coming, but it might be decades away.

“Frankly, we don't want to be the idiots that build the last giant, empty parking garage,” Roler says. “Nobody wants to be that idiot. But at the same time, we think that there's demand for at least 10,000 new residents in downtown Memphis, and we're trying to grow that density so we can grow the tax base. So what do we do?”

Those new arrivals would need a place to park until the self-driving future arrives, Roler notes. Hence the city's approach of building just enough parking, but not too much.

Focus on mobility rather than parking. The Downtown Parking Authority recently changed its name to the Downtown Mobility Authority. Memphis is taking a more holistic approach, so that it doesn't focus on parking alone but on broader issues such as walkability and shared transit.

That means creating wayfinding signs, improving blighted blocks, and otherwise encouraging walking as a safe and pleasant experience.

Contact: Brett Roler, [Downtown Memphis Commission](http://DowntownMemphisCommission.com), 901-575-0574. **DIX**

Waiving parking enforcement backfires

In May, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms responded to the coronavirus pandemic with a number of emergency initiatives, including an end to parking enforcement in the city.

The move, while well-intentioned, came with a downside, says David Wardell, vice president of operations and public safety at Central Atlanta Progress.

“All the residents have tied up all the curb parking,” Wardell says.

As a result, when patrons of downtown businesses try to pick up takeout food, no spaces are available — so visitors simply double-park.

Despite those issues, the city has waived parking tickets for months. Lance Bottoms extended the administrative order through October.

Downtowns deal with homelessness “one person at a time”

In Chicago and Reno, NV, downtown leaders are trying a new approach to homelessness. Instead of viewing homelessness as a criminal problem, these cities aim to guide troubled people toward solutions for their deep-seated issues.

Both downtowns have hired social workers to work on the front lines. This new breed of downtown ambassadors is charged with a tall task — get to know homeless people, understand their individual problems, and gracefully ease them back into mainstream society.

It’s not an easy or inexpensive solution, but proponents say it’s a more compassionate — and ultimately more effective — way to make a dent in aggressive panhandling, public intoxication, and other challenges faced by many downtowns.

“You really have to deal with one person at a time,” says Michael Edwards, president and chief executive officer of the Chicago Loop Alliance. “They’re people, and each one of them is an individual.”

Edwards has pushed the concept in Chicago over recent years. The Chicago Loop Alliance launched its program in 2013 with five ambassadors trained as social workers.

At first, the social workers hung back. They simply observed the homeless population, looking for patterns of behavior. Only after months of study did the ambassadors begin to engage with people living on the streets.

The Chicago Loop Alliance now spends about \$600,000 a year on staffing for the program, Edwards says. While ambassadors make well above minimum wage, a booming economy before the coronavirus pandemic made turnover a challenge.

“We have had a hard time keeping social service workers,” says Edwards.

Meanwhile, Edwards says, he has continued to soften his approach to homelessness. The Chicago Loop Alliance once urged down-

town visitors and residents not to give money to panhandlers. After pushback from an advocacy group, Edwards changed that position.

“If people need to panhandle to have money to eat, we’re OK with that,” Edwards says.

That kinder and gentler view reflects Edwards’ attempts to take a more compassionate approach to people who are homeless.

That sort of empathy isn’t always easy — homeless people can test the patience of downtown leaders with everything from shouting to panhandling aggressively to urinating or defecating in public. But advocates of the new approach note that the most troubled homeless people have fallen through social safety nets.

Homelessness won’t disappear from big cities, Edwards says. His goal is to manage the problem rather than eradicate it.

In Reno (est. pop. 250,989), the Downtown Reno Business Improvement District has also recruited ambassadors with expertise in social work. In some cases, the ambassadors

City turns vandalism into opportunity for public art

When protests in downtown Dallas turned violent in late May, protesters broke windows worth \$5 million. Downtown Dallas Inc. turned lemons into lemonade — it used the boards as a canvas for a public art project.

“We’re working with them to make sure it’s a pleasant and artistic experience, as opposed to just boards on buildings,” says Martin Cramer, vice president of public safety at Downtown Dallas.

As new windows replace the boards, Downtown Dallas has taken the opportunity to audit the cleanliness and appearance of downtown streetscapes. The group has urged business owners to take such steps as repairing their buildings and cleaning sidewalks.

have lived through homelessness and addiction recovery themselves, says Alexander Stettinski, the BID's executive director.

Reno's new approach to helping the homeless is a labor-intensive process. In some cases, BID staff will interact with the same person as many as 20 times a day over a period of months, Stettinski says.

"If people need to panhandle to have money to eat, we're OK with that."

In one instance, downtown Reno was home to a chronically homeless man who grew aggressive when he was drinking. That man became the first target of one of the BID's social workers. She spent months getting to know the man and offering help.

"It took about six months until this man told her he wanted to get sober and off the streets," Stettinski says.

The social worker found the man a hotel room, took him to food pantries, and set up a fiduciary account to hold his Social Security check.

"This was our very first success, about a year ago," Stettinski says.

Since then, the Downtown Reno BID has focused its efforts on a handful of chronically homeless people, endeavoring to provide them with housing, mental

health services, job training, and other services. One downtown property developer helps the effort by putting \$500 a month on a prepaid credit card to pay for incidental expenses for homeless people who are accepting help.

Finding ambassadors isn't easy. Stettinski wants people who not only have training in social work but also have been sober for at least two years and can represent downtown professionally.

"It is one of the hardest jobs I can imagine," Stettinski says. "They're out in the elements, whether it's warm or cold, whether it's wet or dry. They encounter not-so-nice people all day long. You have to have a tenacity."

In one case, the Downtown Reno BID had to fire an ambassador who began to respond in kind to aggressive behavior from homeless people. Stettinski says the man had been a stellar ambassador up to that point — and he reached a breaking point as a result of the pressures of a relentlessly difficult job.

*Contacts: Michael Edwards, [Chicago Loop Alliance](#), 312-782-9160; Alex Stettinski, [Downtown Reno Business Improvement District](#), 775-432-0776. **DIX***

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Can outdoor dining coexist with winter? Here's how to make it work

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many downtowns to rethink their outdoor spaces. By summer, downtown leaders had adapted — vacant lots, sidewalks, and even streets gave way to al fresco dining.

Now, though, the changing of the seasons will present a new challenge: Are downtown visitors willing to sit outside when the weather turns cold?

"Everybody is scrambling to find the best way to prepare their cities for winter," says Jaime Izurieta of Storefront Mastery.

Instead of stocking up on propane heaters, Izurieta advises changing perceptions. He suggests embracing cold weather in the spirit of polar-bear plunges, the New Year's tradition that finds people plunging into frigid waters.

This winter will challenge downtown leaders' placemaking prowess, he says. You can provide tents and outdoor heaters, but if you don't entice visitors with creative events and promotions, your downtown will be empty.

"We need heaters, but we need very good reasons to come out," Izurieta says.

One reality of winter is that it's the wind chill that makes winter temps truly bone-chilling. Izurieta suggests adapting existing architectural features to create windbreaks.

Recruit makers and downtown artisans to brainstorm ideas for weather shelters. Perhaps a bit of plywood and some ingenuity are all that's needed to create a wind break for an outdoor dining area.

Be sure to work with city officials to speed permit approval. Winter is coming fast, he cautions, so don't let red tape block changes.

Embrace the cold

Most Americans move inside during the winter months, but in northern Europe, people enjoy outdoor markets and other outdoor events all winter.

"People really don't mind the cold," Izurieta says.

He also advises raising the perceived temperature, if not the actual mercury, through "guerilla warming." Paint "warm murals," roll colorful yarn and lights around trees that have lost their leaves, and use banners that tout wintertime events.

Daylight savings time leads to early sunsets and long evenings, so it's especially important to make sure downtown is well-lit and inviting.

"When people are looking at these warm displays, it feels warmer," Izurieta says.

Giving out free stuff is another tried-and-true tactic. Blankets, scarves, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, or hot cider can all make visitors feel warm and welcome.

Isaac Kremer, executive director of the Metuchen Downtown Alliance in Metuchen, NJ (est. pop. 13,853), spent the late summer and early autumn preparing for cold weather.



In Portland, OR, a team of local fiber artists gives iconic downtown sculptures cozy outfits. They "yarn bomb" the deer, otters, beavers, and other critters with festive seasonal colors and designs.

Metuchen bought 65 outdoor heaters for use throughout its downtown. It's up to business owners to pay for electrical upgrades to safely operate the heaters, and for the electrical bills.

The new wave of outdoor dining means a new series of regulations for downtown leaders to navigate. For instance, fire-rated tents are expensive, but they're safe for outdoor heaters.

Meanwhile, Metuchen plans to keep its holiday lights on long after the holidays, and probably through March, Kremer says.

In addition to lights, Metuchen plans to put up holiday decorations, hire bands to play outdoors, and hang mistletoe.

And he's getting creative: Kremer suggests setting up a sidewalk potato baker, a small oven to cook spuds. Visitors can put the potatoes in their pockets to stay warm.

Contact: Isaac Kremer, [Downtown Metuchen Alliance](#), 732-515-9660. **DIX**

"We need heaters, but we need very good reasons to come out."

Bereft of visitors, tourism hub makes pitch to local residents

In normal times, Las Vegas' casinos, conventions, and concerts bring a steady stream of visitors. During the coronavirus pandemic, however, Sin City has seen its famed Strip go unusually empty.

To give local merchants a boost, the Downtown Vegas Alliance launched a "Playcation" promotion aimed at residents who are already in Vegas.

"Downtown small business owners are hanging in there," Carolyn Wheeler, executive director of the Downtown Vegas Alliance, tells the *Las Vegas Sun*. "If we can maybe replace some of that tourist visitation and business visitation with locals who are itching to get out, that would be a big positive."

The campaign is a partnership of downtown businesses, casinos, museums, and retail outlets. Tony Hsieh, the founder of online

retailer Zappos.com and a downtown booster, came up with the idea for the campaign.

Visitors can download the Explore DTLV smartphone app or go online to find discounts. Downtown leaders put together itineraries with themes such as vintage Vegas, dining, family fun, the Mob Museum, and selfie backdrops.

Wheeler says the campaign grew from the realization that many Las Vegans are itching to get out of the house. And with cooler temperatures, autumn is a comfortable time to explore downtown.

"Traditionally, people don't want to fight with the traffic or battle with the 'what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas' crowd," Wheeler tells the *Sun*. "But this is the time to come down and see what downtown is all about and have fun." **DIX**

Massive meal brings residents together, boosts optimism — Continued from page 1

executive director of Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals.

The meal was free, but diners were required to register for the event, which took place downtown on a weekday evening in early September. Guests were intentionally

"We wanted you to engage in conversation with people who had different perspectives from you."

placed next to people they might not know.

"We wanted you to engage in conversation with people who had different perspectives from you," Kester says.

In exchange for the free meal, attendees were required to talk about life in Grand Forks. For the 2019 event, more than 130 "table captains" were appointed to lead discussions of groups seated along the table.

"It takes a lot of people to help guide those conversations," Kester says.

The captains served as volunteers. Many were students at the University of North Dakota.

Conversations change attitudes

Organizers also conducted pre-dinner and post-dinner polls about attendees' attitudes and level of engagement in Grand Forks.

"We wanted to see, can a simple conversation with your neighbors change the way you feel about your community?" Kester says.

Diners were asked six questions before and after the dinner. And, in fact, respondents reported feeling more optimistic afterwards.

Participants were asked to respond to each question with a number from 1 to 5, for “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Asked in 2018 whether “it’s easy to start a project” in Grand Forks, the average grade went from 3.52 before dinner to 3.73 afterwards, a 6.1 percent increase.

Queried about whether “Grand Forks is welcoming,” scores went up by 6 percent after the dinner. In all six categories, respondents gave higher marks afterwards — a result that bolsters Kester’s contention that bringing people together can reap tangible rewards.

Kester wanted Longest Table to yield more than just talk, so the event served as a kickoff for a micro-grant program funded by the city. Grand Forks residents could apply for \$3,000 awards to get community projects off the ground.

As of October, 19 projects had been awarded micro-grants, Kester says. Winners include: a library of gardening tools, downtown murals, murals in school bathrooms, a soccer league focused on mental health awareness, and a youth gathering space at the local mall.



Participants gather at numbered tables to discuss life in Grand Forks, ND.



The city provided \$52,000 for the startup grants. In addition, organizers won \$40,000 from the Knight Foundation Donor Advised fund for 2018. For the 2019 encore, they raised \$33,000 in partnerships and grants.

The money went towards such logistical costs as catering the food, designing and processing the surveys, marketing, and renting tables and chairs. Longest Table organizers also hired photographers and videographers.

Contact: Kathryn Kester, [Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals](http://GreaterGrandForks.org), kathryn@ggfyp.com. **DIX**

PATHWAYS AND PUBLIC SPACES

Rain gardens beautify sidewalk, clean rainwater

The Golden Triangle Business Improvement District in Washington, DC, is using rain gardens to both beautify streets and to ease flooding from heavy rains.

The BID spent \$1 million to install two full blocks of rain gardens on sidewalks along 19th Street, says David Suls, the organization’s senior director of planning and policy.

When a downpour comes, the gardens can filter 43,000 gallons of polluted water before the runoff flows into the city’s sewer system and then into the Potomac River.

“It’s important to build as many of these facilities as possible,” Suls says. “We’re never going to be able to build for all storm



Rain gardens line a street in downtown Washington, DC.

events — especially because your 100-year event now seems to be a five-year event.”

The BID chose 19th Street because of the thoroughfare’s wide sidewalks — they’re 35 to 40 feet wide. Construction involved removing the sidewalk and digging six feet deep. Workers then installed underdrains, topped by a layer of gravel, a layer of sand, and a layer of bioretention soil.

Trees and other plants went atop the

garden, along with signs describing the project.

Money from the federal Environmental Protection Agency paid for 55 percent of the cost, and the BID launched a fundraising campaign to cover the rest.

One challenge was working with the city to create a new permitting process geared for nonprofit projects on public property. The city was more accustomed to construction on private land.

Now that the gardens have been completed, maintenance is shared by the BID and property owners.

“These rain gardens have really changed the whole character of 19th Street,” Duhl says. “It was an active street before. Now, it’s an active and completely green and beautiful street.”

Contact: David Suls, [Golden Triangle BID](mailto:dsuls@goldentriangledc.com), dsuls@goldentriangledc.com. **DIX**

ATTRACTION

Pandemic forces downtown parade to go virtual

The Thanksgiving Day parade in downtown Charlotte is a bona fide happening. The 74-year-old parade is the third-largest such event in the nation.

It’s such a big deal that the parade airs live on Charlotte’s CBS affiliate and is syndicated to other television markets throughout the Southeast. The coronavirus pandemic didn’t care about any of that history, of course — the 2020 version of the parade won’t happen, at least not as usual.

“It’s really a big miss for us to not be able to roll that parade down the street on Thanksgiving morning,” says Robert Krumbine, senior vice president of events at Charlotte Center City Partners. “But what we have done is we’ve pivoted.”

Charlotte Center City Partners was able to hang onto its sponsor dollars by doing a television show instead. The Thanksgiving event is set to be televised, but the in-person parade has

transformed into a much different format.

The revamped version will consist of a retrospective look back at 57 years of televised parades, Krumbine says.

The marching bands will go virtual, with high schoolers performing by Zoom. Local musicians will play on a stage, and their performances will be televised.

Sponsors will give messages throughout the hourlong show, which is set to air multiple times in November and December.

“Most of our sponsors were willing to stay with their commitments, but naturally we had a few that backed down on their numbers,” Krumbine says.

His mission was to keep sponsors happy enough that they didn’t cut ties entirely.

“Starting over again when we get into 2021 would not be a fun project,” Krumbine says.

Contact: Robert Krumbine, [Charlotte Center City Partners](mailto:rkrumbine@charlottecentercity.org), rkrumbine@charlottecentercity.org. **DIX**

Idea Exchange

Street design and recovery

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has released a new guide, *Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery*. The online guide provides cities with strategies they can use to redesign and adapt streets for new uses during the pandemic and recovery.

The report compiles successful practices from cities worldwide such as converting curbside lanes into expanded sidewalks or bike lanes, creating pedestrian-only or slow and shared streets to enable physical distancing, designating sidewalk or street space for café seating or outdoor dining, sidewalk or roadbed queue zones for people waiting to enter small businesses. The report provides technical assistance, real-world examples, and information on planning, public engagement, design and implementation for each strategy.

Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery may be downloaded from NACTO's COVID-19 Transportation Response Center at nacto.org/covid19.

Comeback Cuisine

As staff began returning to work at their offices, the Milwaukee Downtown BID #21 launched a program aimed at garnering support for downtown restaurants. The Comeback Cuisine initiative encourages companies to purchase boxed lunches for their employees as a "welcome back" or

"thank you" for their continued service. The BID's goal is to generate the purchase of 3,000 lunches.

"Our downtown restaurants have done a phenomenal job in serving downtown's day and night-time populations, but now it's our turn to return the favor," said Beth Weirick, CEO of Milwaukee Downtown BID #21. "We're calling upon the downtown business community to support their neighborhood eateries in these challenging times, as well as show appreciation for employees who have remained on the frontlines or welcome back a committed workforce."

Adapting to colder weather

When you think about winter in Canada, outdoor dining and shopping may not come to mind. Yet, CBC Canada reports that several Canadian cities are extending temporary patio programs into the fall and winter and taking other measures to support physical distancing at shops, restaurants, and bars.

For example, the City of Ottawa has extended the outdoor patio season until March 31. Similarly, retailers can keep setting up pop-up shops, and restaurants can keep operating patios on private parking lots, through to Dec. 31.

The city also plans to have snow cleared quickly on its main commercial streets, such as Bank Street, Elgin Street, Wellington Street West, and Montreal Road. "You can't have really good curbside pickup if you have a two-foot

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Idea Exchange

snow bank that's blocking the passenger door from opening up," says Mayor Jim Watson.

Classic sidewalk sales breathe new life into city center

A sidewalk sale in downtown Dayton, OH, brought out shoppers and hungry residents on a cool October day. The open-air event featured:

- Outdoor merchandise displays
- Downtown eateries with take-away food and drink specials, and outdoor patios
- Roving entertainers including musicians and magicians
- Local artisans selling their goods
- Free, fall-themed coloring pages at participating businesses.

The Downtown Dayton Partnership reminded all participants that social distancing was in place downtown, with masks required for entry into retail businesses and restaurants and when six feet of distance could not be maintained between groups.

Temporary changes to become permanent

In August, the City of Rochester, NH, converted downtown's one-way North Main Street from two lanes to one. The change provided space for restaurants and other businesses to offer on-street dining. The

Design playbook showcases pandemic solutions

The Canadian Urban Institute and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada have released the *Main Street Design Challenge Playbook*, a collection of design solutions that can be implemented during and after the pandemic.

The challenge sought to demonstrate the role of design in the revitalization of main streets, including kick starting the economy, fostering vibrant, livable, and healthy communities, increasing public safety, reducing social isolation, and restoring the public's confidence to return to city streets and public spaces.

Designs were submitted from a wide range of sources, including architects and urban designers, students, planners, and artists.

The Playbook showcases everything from master plans to art installations to modular street furniture.



To **view the playbook in its entirety** visit DowntownDevelopment.com and click on **"Web Extras."**



short-term measure has proven so successful that the city is now considering making the change permanent.

Support has been strong from business owners and patrons, says the online news source *Fosters.com*

"COVID or no COVID because we want outdoor dining long-term, we're going to look at for next year, for next dining season, making North Main Street downtown one lane," City Attorney Terence O'Rourke said during a recent meeting. **DIX**

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